

the Italian proverb 'better alone than in poor company' into 'any company rather than alone'. When travelling he would look out for the most crowded carriage, as the rest of us did for the emptiest. Sad that during his last illness he would not, or could not, bear to see anyone.

This is what I have to say at present about dear Carlo Placci, as I saw him, put up with him, loved him, and to a limited extent knew him. I wonder what people who have not known him will get out of what I have just written. A consistent impression, no matter how little like the Platonic Idea, the metaphysical portrait? In North Africa the natives attach bits of rags, wool, linen, cotton of any and every colour, to the scraggy bushes planted around the tombs of their marabouts or santons. Perhaps that is all I have contributed to the memory of Carlo Placci. Not an effigy in mosaic.

I. Tatti, Settignano, 24 January 1941.

E. L. T. MESENS

'SCOTTIE' WILSON

A MAN who has refused to be a slave of our chain-civilization; a very simple man, indeed, and who has achieved his own liberation. Not with the light of the spirit nor with a clever interpretation of materialism, but with the discovery, for himself and through his own means, of drawing.

'Scottie' Wilson was born in 1890, in one of the poorer parts of Glasgow. He was one of the many children of a hard working-class family, and as soon as 'Scottie' was in his early 'teens he had to get busy to bring money into the home. This state of affairs would have had no end if he had not rebelled in time.

I met him about nine months ago, and it is with the greatest difficulties since then that I have been able to lift here and there a piece of the curtain that hides his previous life. Not because he is shy, but rather because of a natural discretion that makes a part of his charm and makes his work the more intriguing. He is not the type of adventurer who boasts about the tougher aspects of his life for the benefit of an occasional audience. Far from it. It has

taken me the greatest patience (and a fair number of pints of bitter) to collect a few facts about himself. I am going to give them away without bombast, and with the certainty not to hurt 'Scottie' in the slightest degree. Apparently, he ran away from home at the age of sixteen and went to volunteer for the army at Aldershot. From there he was sent to a garrison in Bloemfontein (South Africa). How he got out of it, and what happened afterwards, I do not know, but about fifteen years ago, after having returned to his native Scotland, he decided one day to go to Canada. Here again he told me that he opened a second-hand furniture shop at Toronto. It was not a success, and the little money he had got to set it up soon vanished. Not too much troubled by his commercial setback, 'Scottie' retired more and more frequently into his back shop, where he passed long hours in covering a large piece of beaverboard on his work-table top with tiny pen strokes. Since his childhood he had been haunted by strange dreams, and now he suddenly found himself able to give them plastic form, finding in this activity the greatest satisfaction and gratification for himself. Unhappiness, want, and petty miseries, ceased suddenly to have any importance for him. The second-hand furniture business was soon wound up. He found one day on his path a charming and refined man, a *de luxe* bookbinder and decorator, called Mr. Douglas Duncan, who fell for 'Scottie's' work, bought it and supported him. Since then 'Scottie' has never stopped drawing.

The early works, as far as I can make out—for 'Scottie' has very little sense of data—have very much the aspect of doodlings. But doodlings with a central theme: himself. The pen strokes have about the quality of a schoolboy's writing. (This reminds me of the advertisement, true for once, which says: *THE HAND THAT CAN WRITE CAN ALSO DRAW*. In this case, and elsewhere, I should even be inclined to add: '*The hand that cannot write can draw nevertheless*'.) The colouring of these early drawings—already at this time he used the crayon—is not very convincing, but altogether they are remarkable documents. After that, something must have happened in 'Scottie's' life, because the drawings which follow become suddenly very firm, masterly in writing, and very rich and distinguished in colour. I have tried to find out if he has ever had any friendly relations with artists, and the only story I collected which seems to me of any relevance is the

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following: He met in Toronto a man he called 'the Professor', who tried to play the violin. This man was dirty and badly groomed, and very unhappy with his 'missus'. When 'the Professor' started to play his fiddle the wife shouted and locked him up in the cellar. And there the violinist could apparently only obtain from his instrument the most horrible cat-calls—except when 'Scottie' accepted to go into the cellar with him and conduct (!) his playing. Then, apparently, they had great moments of 'artistic exaltation'. Another story is also interesting: One day 'Scottie' got fed up with the sight of Toronto. He collected all the money he could and made a journey to Winnipeg, where he remained for a certain time. He must have seen some Indian totems because the totemic spirit is present in many of his works. Strangely enough, when I asked him if he remembered any American Indian art he did not, and found no comment to make on them. Perhaps he has absorbed them with the internal eye. In walking the streets of Hampstead and Mayfair with 'Scottie' I have noticed that his faculty of attention for what is going on is seldom awakened. I have put him in front of paintings by artists as diverse as Miró, Picasso, Chirico—even purposely in front of two beautiful Paul Klees—and his comment was a polite 'very nice'. The sole painting that thrilled him, one day, was a Magritte in which there is a musical instrument in brass bursting into flame. That he found wonderful, probably because he had never dreamed of such a happening.

Nevertheless, 'Scottie's' drawings are made with a very remarkable self-invented technique. I have never seen anything resembling these thousands of little strokes patiently aligned; anything resembling this prismatic play of hatching, giving light or volume. The coloured crayons are sometimes applied under the pen strokes, sometimes over them, and constitute eloquent, rich and refined blends. The magic of simplicity.

'Scottie' Wilson does not ask very much from the world. His constant ambition is to show his work with himself drawing in front of the public. He has been 'on show' some time ago in Aberdeen, and apparently is now 'doing another show' in Scarborough. He would like to settle down, he says, with a nice, well-mannered lady who would play the piano, the violin, the harp, or *even* the organ.

'Scottie' Wilson's work, as he says himself, *'is a life's dream'*.

ALDOUS HUXLEY

RELIGION

AND TEMPERAMENT¹

WHAT precisely is the relation between individual constitution and temperament on the one hand and the kind and degree of spiritual knowledge on the other? The materials for a comprehensively accurate answer to this question are not available—except, perhaps, in the form of that incommunicable science, based upon intuition and long practice, that exists in the minds of experienced ‘spiritual directors’. But the answer that *can* be given, though incomplete, is highly significant.

All knowledge, as we have seen, is a function of being. Or, to phrase the same idea in scholastic terms, the thing known is in the knower according to the mode of the knower. In the *Introduction* reference was made to the effect upon knowledge of changes of being along what may be called its vertical axis, in the direction of sanctity or its opposite. But there is also variation in the horizontal plane. Congenitally by psycho-physical constitution, each one of us is born into a certain position on this horizontal plane. It is a vast territory, still imperfectly explored, a continent stretching all the way from imbecility to genius, from shrinking weakness to aggressive strength, from cruelty to Pickwickian kindness, from self-revealing sociability to taciturn misanthropy and love of solitude, from an almost frantic lasciviousness to an almost untempted continence. From any point on this huge expanse of possible human nature an individual can move almost indefinitely up or down, towards union with the divine Ground of his own and all other beings, or towards the last, the infernal extremes of separateness and selfhood. But where horizontal movement is concerned there is far less freedom. It is impossible for one kind of physical constitution to transform itself into another kind; and the particular temperament associated with a given physical

¹ This extract is included by permission of Mr. Aldous Huxley and of Messrs. Chatto and Windus, who will shortly be publishing *The Perennial Philosophy* in this country.